and production of finished steel in the country for the years 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96 have been as under:

(In million tonnes)

Year	Demand	Production
1993-94	15.32	15.20
1994-95	18.66	17.82
1995-96	21.65	21.40

(b) The cost of production of steel primarily depends upon price of inputs such as iron ore, coal, steel scrap and energy and cost of freight, labour and financial charges. The selling prices of various steel products depand upon the input costs and the prevailing market conditions.

(c) The measures being undertaken by the public sector steel plants for cost reduction include increased capacity utilisation, reduction in consumption of major inputs, improvement in productivity, product-mix, customer orientation and availability of machinery through effective maintenance, energy conservation and manufacture of value added items.

Functions of Ispat Vikas Nidhi

3933. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA SWAMY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the functions of the Ispat Vikas Nidhi;

(b) the sources of funding of the Nidhi; and

(c) the work done by the Nidhi during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (c) The Ispat Vikas Nidhi or the Steel Development Fund (SDF) as it is generally known, was constituted in June, 1978 to assist inter-alia the modernisation of development programme of the steel sector. Government had authorised the Joint Plant Committee (JPC) to add an "element" to the ex-works prices of different steel products of the main producers of steel namely, Steel Authority of India Limited, Indian Iron and Steel Company, Tata Iron and Steel Company and, subsequently, Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, towards the SDF. This levy was discontinued with effect from 21/22.4.1994.

Loans from SDF have been sanctioned to the main producers during the last three years for financing their schemes for modernisation and expansion. In addition, SDF is also used for other purposes like funding certain research programmes, paying rebate to small scale industries corporations (SSICs), meeting expenditure incurred on Economic Research Unit (ERU) of the JPC and the Prime Minister's trophy for the best performing integrated steel plant.

Committee to monitor the implementation to legal safeguard for protection of SC/ST/ Miorities

3934. SHRI MOHINDAR SINGH KALYAN: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has constituted a committee on Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities to monitor the implementation of legal safeguards for their protection as well as development programmes;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken so far by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The terms of reference of the Cabinet Committee on Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Minorities as follows:—

(i) All matters pertaining to the protection of the Schedued Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Minorities, especially their protection against any violation of their life, liberty, property and other rights.

(ii) All matters concerning elimination of exploitation of the Scheduled Castes, Schedled Tribes and the Minorities.

(iii) All matters relating to the socio-economic development programmes aimed at bridging the gap between the SCs, STs and Minorities and the rest